

January 7, 2005

Chairman Isenberg and BRTF Members:

Please accept these suggestions on the MLPAL process.

Thank you for your interest in the stewardship of California's ocean resources.

1. The Task Force should have a discussion about who are stakeholders in this process. Understanding that every citizen in the State of California could be considered a stakeholder, it is nevertheless true that some stakeholder groups who directly utilize the ocean have potentially much to lose or much to gain from the outcome of this process. Fishermen and coastal communities have potentially much to lose if they are essentially put out of business or their infrastructure deemed useless. Likewise, scientists working for environmental NGOs or institutions, potentially have much to gain via research and publication opportunities that might occur from a substantially expanded system of MPAs. Environmental organizations are stakeholders in that the outcome of this process is a defined product delivered to their members. The Task Force needs to have this discussion and clearly identify complimentary and competing stakeholder interests.
2. The Task Force would be well served by hearing directly from people who participated in and observed the Channel Islands MPA process. I specifically suggest a presentation by Dr. Mark Helvey who has published a paper on this process. Such a presentation would alert the Task Force to opportunities and pitfalls already experienced in an MPA process.
3. In order for the Task Force, and the MLPA Initiative process generally to proceed in a thorough and informed manner, the process can not be rushed. Right now, the time lines seem unrealistic by any standard. All stakeholders will benefit from sufficient time being available for their concerns to be fully presented and considered.
4. The Science Team must be well balanced, to inspire confidence that a fair discussion will occur. There needs to be more participation from scientists who work in the real world of fishery management, and fishery sociology and economics, even if a couple of the fish ecologists are dropped. It is critical that there be public confidence in the Science Team. Additionally, the Task Force should set the mechanism for a peer review of all Science Team products.
5. The Task Force should formally request that the Science Team follow the MLPA language and begin their work with a report to the Task Force on the Status of existing MPAs.
6. The Task Force should be sure to hear a full report on the status of existing fishing regulations and closures. This report must include an analysis of how each regulation (or category of regulations) may meet or contribute to the goals of the MLPA.

Thank you.

Stephen Scheiblaue  
Harbor Community Representative – SIG